VOX LAICI:

OR, THE

LAYMAN'S OPINION

Touching the

Making Alterations

IN OUR

ESTABLISH'D LITURGY,

In Answer to a Letter from a

Member of the CONVOCATION.

With some Remarks on the (pretended) Answer of *VOX CLERI*

By J. R. *in a Letter to a Friend.*

Jesus Christ the same yesterday and to day, and for ever, Heb. 13. 8.
Hold fast the form of sound Words, Tim. 2. 1. 3.
Earnestly contend for the Faith which was once delivered to the Saints, Jude v. 3.

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VOX LAICI:

OR, THE

Layman's Opinion, &c.

SIR,

I have Received yours; and according to your Requeſt, I have likewiſe perus'd the Letter from a Member of the Convocation, concerning the making Alterations in our Eſtabliſt'd Liturgy; and I ſhall (Sir) give you Impartially my true Sentiments of it; though, at the ſame time, I muſt acknowledge my ſelf (being an Unletter'd Layman) an unfit perſon to defend that Church, (of which I am a true, though unworthy Member) from all thoſe Imperfections which that Authour is pleaſed unjuſtly to charge her with; yet I cannot forbear to ſhew a juſt Reſentment of ſo much Filth and Dirt without cauſe caſt upon her, not only to blacken, but (without all doubt) to ſtifle her quite. I have (Sir) read, or heard of a Child that was Born Dumb, and at the ſudden ſurpriſe of one going to kill his Father, the Violence of his Paſſion (or an Inſtinct in Nature, call it which you

 pleaſe)

pleaſe) broke through all thoſe Impediments that obſtructed his Speech, and forc'd him to cry out, *Oh do not hurt my Father!* which ſo aſtoniſhed the intended Murderer, that he forbore to execute the Horrid Villany, Whether true, or not, I dare not affirm; yet (if true) it confirms a ſaying very uſual amongſt us, (*viz.*) *Some things may be ſaid or done, that will make a Man ſpeak that had never a Tongue:* And that will I hope excuſe my (ſpeaking ſomething to the point in hand and) offering ſome few Conſiderations to our Author's own, Touching the making any Alterations, &c. But before I name them I muſt beg his leave to enquire into two Things in General, *viz.* The Authour, and his Deſign; as for Particulars, I ſhall refer him to *Vox Cleri*, where both his Arguments and Reaſoning is ſufficiently Ridiculed; and of that Piece, let who will be the Authour, he deſerves as great a Bleſſing for defending the Honour and Innocence of his pure and chaſt Spiritual Mother, as *Shem* and *Japhet* for covering the Nakedneſs of their natural Father; and who was curs'd for the contrary, I preſume our Authour can inform us: But who, and what he is, is the firſt of the two Things I crav'd leave to enquire. 'Tis true, he calls himſelf a Member of the Convocation; I ſuppoſe a Worthy one; (or at leaſt one Worthy, &c.) but his Modeſty would not give leave to ſtyle himſelf ſuch: But had he told us he had been an Unworthy Member, &c. I ſhould have believed there had been more Truth than Modeſty in the Expreſſion. But what if our Authour after all ſhould be no Member of the Convocation, nor the Church neither, but only makes uſe of thoſe fine Terms, as Phyſicians do of Gold, to gild their bitter Pills, that they may be the eaſier ſwallowed by their Patient; but whether he be, or not,

not, 'tis much the ſame; for if he be not, then he is a great Cheat and Impoſture, and conſequently deſerves the promotion our Laws has provided for the Entertainment of ſuch; and if he be a Member, &c. I dare be bold to ſay, (whatever he appears outwardly) he is ſuch a rotten mortified one, that it ought to be lop'd off to preſerve the reſt from Gangreen. For if we call that an ill Bird that defiles its own Neſt, what muſt that Bird be called, which not only defiles but joyns with thoſe of prey, to deſtroy both Neſt and all the reſt of the Young, whom our Bleſſed Lord (like the *Pelican*) nouriſhed with his own moſt precious Bloud? Sure if there be a Name for ſuch an Unnatural Bird, it ought to begin with a W— for none but the Son of a Wicked Father, would Reproach and Defame a Virtuous and Chaſt Mother: But our Saviour has told us *a Tree is known by its Fruit*. And thoſe that reads our Authour's Letter, will find but little there but what is forbidden: And ſo much ſhall ſerve for the firſt general Enquiry, Who, and What (we may reaſonably ſuppoſe) our Authour is. The next is his Deſign, and as to that (as the Text ſays) *He that runs may read*; for by a Penny we may know how a Shilling is made, and a skilfull Refiner, by a ſmall quantity of Gold or Silver, will tell the goodneſs of the whole Lump; and any body that obſerves the Arguments of our Authour, muſt have but very little Judgment that do not perceive his Drift, and what Mettle he is made of. Peace and Union in the Church are fine Things, and our Authour ('tis true) has bid as fair for it, as any of his own Principles can wiſh, or the Papiſt deſire; and tells the World (as well as his Bretheren of the Convocation) there is an abſolute neceſſity for it: And truly I ſhould be of the ſame Opinion, did I hope, or long (as I ſuppoſe our

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our Authour does) for such a through Reformation as is made in the Kirk of *Scotland*, and their Brethren in *England* did enjoy by Vertue of their Unnatural Rebellion against their Lawfull Sovereign, *Charles* the First, which proved a through one indeed, for our Hereditary Monarchy, as well as Episcopacy was doubly Refin'd; for the Kingdom was turned into a Common-wealth, and the Convocation into an Assembly of Divines at *Westminster*, of which possibly our worthy Author might be one. And though interest (which never lies) has made him fall (a little) away from the Faith, which was delivered (in these times) by the then Saints,; yet to that byas he still leaves and improves all Occasions to oblige those his old Friends, who long for nothing more then once more to have a scramble (not for the good, but) for the Goods of the Nation, and to reduce both Church and State to the same Modal again. And truly I think nothing can be more conducing to it, than for the two Houses of Parliament and the Convocation to Agree to what this worthy Convocation Author shall propose in Order to destroy our Establish'd Church, *&c.* But Blessed be God if this Author should be a Member, *&c.* yet he is but one, and I hope there are but few (if any) more of his stamp amongst them, that are for leading us out of the good Old way, under pretence of shewing us a better New one. 'Tis true Novelty may please Children and Fools, but I hope our Author does not take the true Sons of the Establish'd Church to be such; if he does, I am sure he is mistaken: For the World knows better, from their constant Loyalty and Obedience to the Crown, which they have suck'd in from the Breasts of their tender Mother the Church, and

knows

knows better than to be decoy'd and carried away by ſuch Philoſophical Kidnappers. And therefore our Author may (as the ſaying is) *Save his Breath to cool his Porridge.* For his Cobweb is ſpun ſo fine it will catch nothing but Inſects, and ſo much ſhall ſerve for the Second general Inquiry, *viz.* The Author's Deſign; which is no leſs than under the pretence of Altering our Eſtabliſh'd Liturgy to deſtroy it quite: But before he proceeds further, I would deſire him and all unbyaſs'd Perſons to conſider of theſe Seven following Conſiderations, touching the making any Alterations in our Eſtabliſh'd Church, &c. *Viz.*

Whether
1. *Needfull.*
2. *Lawfull.*
3. *Convenient.*
4. *Who it will Oblige.*
5. *Who it will not Oblige.*
6. *Which are the moſt.*
7. *The Effects and Conſequence.*

I will begin with the Firſt, Whether needfull, &c. When I conſider the many trifling Arguments of the Diſaffected Perſons, to the Government of our Church as by Law Eſtabliſhed, with the unanſwerable Confutations of them all; and not only her Doctrines but Diſcipline prov'd Apoſtolical, by a great many of her True and Pious Sons in all Ages ſince the Reformation; I cannot but be amaz'd to hear it complain'd of now as if defective. For thoſe muſt needs think it ſo, that tell us their is an abſolute neceſſity to have it mended: but I would fain know, what ſecurity will theſe nice Reformers (of Things indifferent) give us, (ſhould they be truſted with the

the matter, &c.) to make it better and more agreeable to the Scriptures than now it is? Or can they give us any demonſtrations that Almighty God is not well pleaſed with it, but ſhould like it much better if reduced to that Form, (which in truth has neither Form nor Comlineſs) it had Forty Years ago? If they can do that, I ſhall quickly alter my Opinion, and with our worthy Convocation Author think, it both needfull and abſolutely neceſſary to have our Eſtabliſhed Liturgy altered or mended as they pleaſe, and not before. For to me nothing is a more convincing Argument of Providence, than the Beginning, Continuation, and Preſervation of our Church of *England*, notwithſtanding the many Imaginations both of Men and Devils to deſtroy it. And if compariſons may be allowed, we may obſerve Almighty God was pleaſed to permit its firſt Propagators, as he did thoſe of the Goſpel, to Sacrifice their Lives and Fortunes as a Teſtimony of the Truth of it. And I ſhall (knowing a Word to the Wiſe is ſufficient) conclude this firſt Conſideration, with that complaint God himſelf makes in the *5th.* of *Iſaiah*, *v.* 3. 4. *And now O Inhabitants of* Jeruſalem, *and Men of* Judah, *Judge I pray you betwixt me and my Vineyard. What could have been done more to my Vineyard, then I have not done in it*, &c. But,

Secondly, Whether Lawfull, &c. What I here mean by Law, is not our Statute Laws, or the Political Cuſtoms of Countrys, nor the Laws that proceeds from Abſolute Power, (though ſome will tell us, they that have it has the beſt Right, &c.) but I mean the impartial Law of right Reaſon and Underſtanding which the Apoſtle St. *Paul* tells us the very Heathens themſelves had: *Their Conſcience accuſing and*

and excuſing them, according to their Actions. And this Law very properly may be called *Jure Divino*; and ought to be a Pattern for all humane Laws to be made by: And thoſe that does not correſpond with this juſt Rule muſt needs be defective. And I dare appeal to the niceſt Pretenders of this Equitable Law, (provided he be not as our Author a prejuic'd Perſon) whether, according to this Golden Rule, the making any Alteration in our Eſtabliſhed Liturgy can, at this time, be thought Lawful or Rational? 'Tis true, they that make Laws, may without all doubt either Diſpence or Alter them when they pleaſe, or ſee occaſion for ſo doing in Church or State: Yet at the ſame time 'tis but reaſonable to ſuppoſe they never do without Appealing to this unalterable Law of Equity, for a juſt Decree in ſuch a Caſe! And whether the Caſe in diſpute requires it, I ſhall likewiſe appeal to greater Judges than my ſelf, to judge of that matter, *viz.* Whether the making any Alterations, &c. be Lawful. But,

Thirdly, The Third Conſideration is, whether convenient? The Conveniency of Time, Place, and Circumſtances, has often gained Advantage in matters and affairs; which the contrary has as often loſt. And I preſume our haſty Reformers have thoroughly conſidered of thoſe three neceſſary things; yet ſometimes a Stander by may ſee more than a Gamſter; and many times it happens ſo, when he diſcovers the Miſtake: But that there may be none in this great concern, is not only mine, but I preſume every honeſt Man's deſire, and the chief Reaſon of this important Conſideration; And I heartily wiſh that thoſe that judge it (for Reaſons beſt known to themſelves) convenient to Alter thoſe few, yet deſent, Ceremonies, which the

Church retains and makes uſe of (perhaps) for no other Reaſon, may not be miſtaken. For I have Charity enough to believe it is by ſome deſigned well and in tenderneſs towards ſome of our Diſſenting Brethren, in hope poſſibly to gain them to our Communion: But I am afraid it will not have the intended effects, for by all that I can hear they deſire no ſuch thing, and I think they are in the Right, for unleſs the Alterations did amount to what they deſire, (and what that is we may gueſs, *viz.* the Aboliſhing Epiſcopacy) it will be no kindneſs to them at all. And whether it will be any to thoſe who are very well ſatisfied with the Diſcipline of the Church as it is, I ſhall leave it to this worthy Authour to judge. But it may be objected that the intended Alterations, is not ſo much to pleaſe thoſe that are without the pale of the Church as ſome that are within; and has already told us they cannot come up to its height, and therefore for that Reaſon it may be thought convenient to make ſome Alterations, *&c.* fearing theſe peeviſh Children ſhould ſtraggle from their Mother and be loſt. To which I Anſwer, Whether is it fit for the Parents to truckle and ſubmit to their froward ſtubborn (and perhaps) ignorant Children, than they (as becomes their Duty) to their Parents? Or can it be thought convenient (or as our Author ſays, there is an abſolute neceſſity) for our tender Mother the Church, to cut off her Breaſts or dry up the ſincere Milk, *&c.* becauſe ſome peeviſh untoward Brats (which deſerves not the name of Children) complains they can find no nouriſhment in them: If ſo, I ſhall then Confeſs this Conſideration is abſolutely needleſs; and that Babes and Sucklings can better judge of what is fit for them than the moſt

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wiſe and prudent Parents in the World. But what if after Altering, &c. the froward and the peeviſh ſhould remain ſo ſtill? What will be got by our breaking the Links of a ſtrong and well compaſs'd Chain, when we have often ſeen the breaking but of one, has indangered the whole? For theſe, and many more Reaſons, too tedious here to recite, I think, and in the words of our Authour muſt ſay, there is an abſolute neceſſity of conſidering of this Conſideration, (*viz.*) Whether making any Alterations, &c. be convenient? But,

Fourthly, The Fourth Conſideration is, Who will it Oblige? Methinks I hear many Anſwer readily to this Conſideration, before they have at all conſidered of the matter, by telling us, it will Oblige a great many of (if not all) the Diſſenters, and truly I am of their Opinion; for, as the Authour of *Vox Cleri* wiſely Obſerves, they would be glad of ſuch an Opportunity to hold forth to their Congregations, and tell them they may now plainly ſee the Truth of what they had ſo often told them, concerning the Common Prayer and the ſinfulneſs of it; which they have now without our deſiring Altered ſome few ſmall matters, but the chief points in Diſpute they retain ſtill. But for Argument, I will ſuppoſe the Altering our Eſtabliſhed Liturgy would Oblige ſome of our Diſſenters in another ſenſe; I pray who are theſe Diſſenters, (that ſome body would ſo fain Oblige?) Are they Friends or Enemies to the Church? if the former, ſmall matters will do it; if the latter, 'tis to be feared great ones will not. Our Bleſſed Lord 'tis true has Commanded us *To love our Enemies, and pray for them that deceitfully uſe us*; but I do not any where Read of Carreſſing, Obliging and Truſting them with thoſe

matters, which gives them but the more Power to deſtroy us, &c. I cannot tell but the doing of ſuch things may be counted Politicks in the Church; but I preſume they never would be ſo reckoned in the State: And I am apt to believe if a Governor of a well Fortified City had but a ſuſpicion of a few falſe Friends within the Walls, he would be more afraid of being betray'd by thoſe few within, than overcome by a great Army without. If any body doubts the truth of this Aſſertion, I believe the French King can ſolve the doubt; And by this time we may begin to ſuppoſe who, and what they are that will (if any) be obliged; *viz* the Enemies of our Church, who has endeavoured as much as in them lay, to deſtroy it quite; and fain would, if that they could, do the ſame again: And therefore (like Vermin at the Cheeſe and Bacon) they begin with nibbling at the Cerimonies of our Church; but if let alone they will devour it all. We have had Examples enough of this kind, and of the difficulty of Obliging theſe ſort of Men: As for inſtance, in *Charles* II. time, when he granted them an Indulgence they gave out he did it not ſo much through love as fear; becauſe (as they always boaſted of their Numbers) they were ſo conſiderable a part of his Kingdoms; and when that good King took (and not without cauſe) other Meaſures, it was called by no other Name than downright Tyranny. Which Confirms the reaſonableneſs of his Fathers Advice to him concerning them, (*viz.*) *Forgive them but never truſt them.* And how much Reaſon that Royal Martyr had to ſay ſo, I will leave it to our Convocation Authour to judge: As for my part I cannot help thinking it was very good and wholſome Advice, and when it was moſt Obſerved, both

both the Church and the State was the leſs in danger, but however if the Governors of both are of another Opinion and will try Concluſions, I ſhall not envy the happineſs of thoſe that ſhall find them Obliged by it. But,

Fifthly, Who it will not oblige? There are ſome Men in the World, who tells us, we know nothing but by Compariſon; then by the ſame Rule of knowing who and what ſort of Perſons the Altering our, &c. will oblige, we may have a ſhrode Gueſs who and what ſort they are it will not; which in plain Terms are the true Sons of the Church, as it is now by Law Eſtabliſh'd, who is and always was tender of any Affront or Diſhonour put upon her, as well as being always Obedient to her Commands, which by them was never thought Grievous; and what *Solomon* ſay's of Wiſdom, may be truly ſaid of her Doctrines and Diſcipline, (*viz.*) *All her Ways are pleaſant and her Paths peace.* Certainty was ever prefer'd before an Uncertainty; and as the ſaying is, *A Bird in Hand is worth two in the Buſh*; therefore it is worth while to Conſider, whither the leſſning (if not the loſing) of one Party which the Church are ſure of, to gain another which they have not the leaſt Reaſon in the World to hope they ſhall; beſides one *Iſaac* ought to be valued before many *Iſhmaels*, though ſome will tell us the contray: Advice has not only been Given, but put much in Practice in the Two laſt Reigns, (*viz.*) Oblige your Enemies, becauſe your Friends you are ſure will never forſake ye, &c. Which Maxim (let who will be the Authour) we have by Experience ſeen it ſufficiently Ridiculed, and look'd upon as a weak piece of Politicks, for not only Enemies but Friends (at leaſt pretended ones) when Diſobliged, (Nay, oftentimes

oftentimes without) has prov'd Falſe and Treacherous, and (*Judas* like) Betray'd perhaps the beſt of Maſters; and though doing Good for Evil is a Command of our Saviours, and is an excellent Character of a good Chriſtian; yet amongſt the Sons of Men 'tis very ſeldom (if at all) put in Practice; but the contrary we ſee very often, and private Peaks many times proſecuted with more Zeal and Heat, than the general Good of a Kingdom; from all which, 'tis no unreaſonable Conſideration, to conſider as well who it will not, as who the Alteration will Oblige. But,

Sixthly, The Sixth Conſideration, which are moſt? Amongſt the many Pamphlets (ſome years ſince) that come out againſt a Sermon Preach'd before my Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen, by the learned *Dean* of St. *Pauls*, (now Biſhop of *Worceſter*) by that Party that our Authour would Oblige. I remember a pretty Paſſage in Mr. *A*-----s in quoting of Expoſitors in which he tells the then *Dean*, he believed he could carry it by the Poll at *Guildhall*, his being more in the Right in his Miſchief of Impoſitions, than the Dr. in his Miſchief of Seperation, (or to that effect;) which I confeſs was briskly offered, and did carry with it a confident Aſſurance of their Numbers, which they ever uſe to brag of, and their carrying all Things by the Poll: But I remember the Dr. in his juſt Juſtification, did in its proper place Return Mr. *A.* this modeſt Anſwer, (*viz.*) *If he had no better Skill in Polling* Nonconformiſts *than in Polling* Expoſitors, *he might poſſibly be miſtaken*, (or to that purpoſe;) And I am eaſily perſwaded, were our Convocation Authour to put it to the iſſue of a Poll whither our Eſtabliſh'd Liturgy ſhould be Altered, *&c.* it would be carried againſt him; unleſs

by

by Mr. *A*----'s Aſſiſtance he could get the Poll to be taken at *Guild-hall*, and hardly then niether, unleſs ſome of that Gang ſhould, as they uſe to do at a Pinch, Poll thoſe that has no Right, to gain the Point. And yet I muſt confeſs, accordingto the manner of the World, they are in the Right, for our Saviour ſays, *The Children of this World are wiſer in their Generation than the Children of Light:* And it was ever obſerv'd that moſt Deſigning Men, whoſe chief end is to gain ſomething extraordinary, do ſeldom Conſider the Juſtice and Lawfulneſs of the means; but if they poſſeſs themſelves of the effects of their deſire 'tis ſufficient; though at the ſame time 'tis a fault ſufficient; and it is little leſs in thoſe who through Lazineſs and Sloth, ſets them down content, not troubling themſelves to oppoſe the Enemy; but upon the Honeſty and Juſtice of their Cauſe, preſumes and believs God Almighty can, and will do his own Work without any of their Aſſiſtance; for which perhaps he is pleaſed to ſuffer his own People to be ſeverely puniſh'd, and his Judgments (as often they do) begin at his own Houſe, and permit the wicked and worſt of Men to rule over us. But bleſſed be his Name he has told us, If we repent and return he will return and deliver us from the hands of our Enemies, let them be never ſo Strong and their boaſted Numbers never ſo Great; and then it will ſignify little which are moſt, they that by Alterations, *&c.* are obliged or they that are not. But,

Seventhly, This Conſideration is both the laſt and principaleſt of them all, and therefore ought to be the moſt deliberately conſidered the better to be Armed againſt it; for the Effects and Conſequences of miſtakes are very often as various as they are diſmal

mal and dangerous; and we need not go far from home for a Confirmation of it, for any body that will give himſelf the trouble to take a ſhort view of our Domeſtick Troubles, from Forty one to the happy Reſtauration, may ſee a ſad demonſtration of the Truth of this aſſertion: And it's poſſible the Intentions of a great many Perſons, who was concerned in thoſe Alterations, both of Church and State in thoſe Times, might be very Honeſt and Innocent, for nothing was pretended at Firſt (as the People was made to believe) but a Reforming ſome ſmall Matters in the Church and State. But we all know thoſe little beginings ended with no leſs than the total Deſtruction of both: But perhaps ſome may ſay old Things ſhould be forgotten, and truly ſo they ſhould, and therefore they are the more to blame that promotes ſuch Things as cannot but bring them a freſh into our Memories. And it cannot be denied had thoſe Enemies of the Crown as well as Church been capable, of being Obliged that Pious and good King *Charles* I. had done it; for they asked and demanded, and he gave till he had nothing left, but a good Conſcience, and becauſe he would not part with that too, they parted his Head from his Shouldiers. By which we may perceive the dire effects of Zeal, eſpecially when it is not according to knowledge: But from ſuch Zeal and ſure Reformers, we ought (as our Holy Church has wiſely taught us to pray) Good Lord deliver us. For what with the Papiſt on the one hand, and theſe (as they call themſelves) true Proteſtants on the other, the poor Church of *England* may be ſaid to look like our Saviour on the Croſs, when between the two Thieves, only with this difference, one of them Repented of the Evil he had done,

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and begged our Saviours forgiveneſs, but neither of theſe I preſume ever did: But are ſtill contriving to undermind the Foundation of our Eſtabliſh'd Chu:ch in order to deſtoy it quite. But I hope it is founded upon ſuch a Rock, as the Gates of Hell cannot prevail againſt it; and ſo we have the more Reaſon to hope, the Weapons our Authour (and his Aſſociates) has formed againſt her, will not proſper; unleſs thoſe grievous Sins, this unhappy Nation has been guilty of, ſhould haſten thoſe Judgments, which they juſtly deſerve: Which the great God of Heaven divert, and ſuffer not our Candleſtick to be moved once again off its place, is a Prayer very proper at this time, for all the true ſincere Sons of the Church of *England*, who us reſolves to be Obedient to her as ſhe is now by Law Eſtabliſhed without Alterations or Amendments: but what they may be afterwards, Time and the Changes that are made will produce their proper Effects and Conſequencies, but what thoſe may be is the ſubject of this Conſideration; And I think we ought to look before we leap, leaſt like the Dog in the Fable we let go the ſubſtance for a ſhadow; which poſſibly may be the Effect, and Conſequence of Altering our Eſtabliſh'd Liturgy: And if there were no other, that would be enough to ſatisfy any reaſonable Perſon of the reaſonableneſs of this more then Important Conſideration which I will end with the words of a great Poet, (they being much to the purpoſe) in his Satyr againſt Sedition. (P. 8.)

Too happy England, *if our good we knew!*
Would ye poſſeſs the freedom ye perſue!
The laviſh Government can give no more;
Yet we repine, and plenty makes us poor.

God try'd us once, our Rebel Fathers fought;
He glutted them with all, the Power they ſought:
Till maſter'd by their own Uſurping Brave
The Free-born Subject ſunk into a ſlave.
We loath'd our Manna, and we long'd for Quales:
Ah what is Man, when his own wiſh prevails!
How raſh; how ſwift to plunge himſelf in ill!
Proud of his Power, and boundleſs in his will.

And ſuch a will was in our former nice Reformers of things (as they themſelves call) Indifferent. And ſo I am come to the end of theſe ſeven Conſiderations, which I intended ſhould likewiſe have ended this Letter; but the Anſwer of *Vox Cleri* falling into my hand before I had quite finiſhed them, I have likewiſe altered my intentions to ſpeak a word or two to that (as he calls himſelf) merry Authour; And the merry pranks he would if he could play with our Eſtabliſh'd Church. As for any particulars in his Book I think they are Anſwered ſufficiently by that worthy Authour, whom he would have the World believe he has ſufficiently Anſwered; but an impartiall Reader will eaſily perceive (notwihſtanding his great flouriſh at the beginning, and his proclaiming himſelf a Conqueror at the latter end) the whole Army of *Vox Cleri's* Arguments ſtands their ground both in Frunt, Rear, Right wing and left, without the leaſt appearance of diſorder. And for, all that mighty Artillery, that has been drawn up (by whoſe Command I know not) with deſign to batter down the Walls of the Church; yet Bleſſed be God they have not as yet made in them a breach big enough to reach to the Crown; and I do not queſtion, but he that has taken an Oath to preſerve

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and defend both (from their known Enemies) will to his utmoſt do it effectually. Notwithſtanding thoſe ridiculous Arguments, which the Authours (or Authour) of thoſe three Pamphlets *viz. The Letter from a Country Miniſter. The Letter from a Member of the Convocation, and the merry Anſwer to Vox Cleri.* And that which makes me the more inclinable to think one Authour writ them all, is becauſe I find one and the ſame deſign in them, and one and the ſame way mannaged only with ſome few variations, as Muſicians from the different performances of particular graces, will make one and the ſame tune appear different. But our Authour I preſume has as little Skill in Muſick, as love for Harmony, and therefore (like the Fox that loſt his Tail) would perſwade all others it is needleſs to have one: but they muſt change their *Cuckow* Note before they can gain any Proſelyte, to be in love with their confus'd Notions. *Vox Cleri* (ſays the Anſwerer P. 1.) writes as if he was Clerk or Secratary to the Convocation, which certainly ſuppoſes him to be a Man of ſome Abilities; though he would by his New-years Gift have the World believe he is the moſt oppoſed Perſon living: But whether he be Clerk to the Convocation I do not know, but I am apt to believe by this Authours Writing he may have ſome hopes (if not a promiſe) of ſuch a place when the Convocation is turned into ſuch an Aſſembly of Divines as we had once met at *Weſtminſter*, for he ſays (P. 8.) no body Brews Ale without ſome body to Drink it, which is true indeed, and I do believe no body Brews Sedition (though in Sanctify'd Tubs without a proſpect of being a gainer by it: but he tells us (P. 9.) of a great Mans Propoſals, whoſe Wiſdom and Learning fits him

to be Univerſal Biſhop of the Chriſtian Church. But he does not tell us the great Man was Ordered by any ſuch Biſhop to propoſe them. But if our Authour has ſuch a great Eſteem of that Learned Man, I hope he has the ſame likewiſe for his Writings (which claims no leſs) and thoſe ſpeak him to be another ſort of a Man than what we have Reaſon to believe our Authour is; for that Learned Man has told the World in a Sermon the miſchief of Separation, and notwithſtanding he was attackt with ſuch unreaſonable odds, he boldly entered the Field, and like a wiſe and valiant Champion conquered the Enemies, as our Authour may at his leaſure ſee in his Learned Vindication of his Sermon, called *The Unreaſonableneſs of Separation*, which is the ſame Book that our Authour quotes for the great Mans Propoſals, *&c.* in which Learned Piece any body may ſee not only our Authours Picture, but the whole Parties drawn ſo to the Life, that none that views it, but muſt needs own, 'twas done by a skilfull hand: and though but a Coppy 'tis ſo alike the Original (the Papiſts) that few or none can diſcover the difference, for ſeveral of them (poſſible this Authour might be one) did make uſe of the Papiſts Arguments againſt him in their Writing (as they call it) againſt the Churches Impoſitions: And our Authour has taken up the Argument a freſh in their Juſtification, and at one blow has knocked the Church down, with that thorough Charge of laying the Schiſm at her own door; and yet he tells us, (P. 10.) he is not willing to pull down the Pillars of the Church to enlarge it; and truly I believe the ſame; for if they once come to be pull'd down, then ſome body ought to take care of the Crown; for by Experience we know

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the taking down of the one, is but for the more easy reaching to the other; and no body doubts the pulling down of the Pillars, &c. can be for the Enlargment of either; though at the same time it may be for the Advancement of something else. Our Authour believes (P. 10.) the Church would stand as well, though *Tobit* and all the *Apochrypha* were taken out of the Calender, and some Ceremonies out of the Rubrick (I suppose he means a great some, if not all) I confess some weak brained People, like our Author, has taken offence at *Tobit* and his Dog, and has (their Talent lying no other way) talked wittily (as they thought) about it. But there are a company of blind Puppies which do more hurt by their continual Barking against the Church, then *Tobit* or his Dog, or Bell and the Dragon either; but I hope it will be to as little purpose, as those snarling Curs, that bark against the Moon. The Lunatick (he tells us of P. 12.) that would not let the Barber cut his Beard, for fear he should cut off his Head, I think is a fit Companion for our Authour; and 'tis great pity one dark Room with clean Straw, did not serve them both: For wou'd any but a Lunatick make any such Comparisons? As 'tis plain he means the Church which is in fear of losing its Head, by reforming the Face. And is it not reasonable to fear the worst, when we have already seen the effects of such notable reforming Shavers, who under the pretence of clipping the Churches wings, looks into a more nearer *Geneva* Form, lop'd all off, and at last the Head too? and therefore its both Reasonable and Natural for a burnt Child to dread the Fire; but our Authour writes as if we were all Lunaticks, and indeed we ought to be counted so, or worse, if he could

perswade

perſwade us to be drawn twice through a Ditch with a Cat and a Cart-rope; once in an Age is ſufficient to put that trick upon us: for ſhould we agree to it again, inſtead of beſtowing a New-years Guift upon *Vox Cleri*, we ſhould every one of us deſerve ſuch a favour from our Authour, and then he might juſtly boaſt how many he had put into his own Livery. He ſays (P. 14.) he is not for letting in Enemies into the Church, but ſurely by coming in they become Friends, but this is ſuch a piece of Philoſophy I never hear'd of; for if they be not Friends before their coming into the Church, their being let in will not have much Operation to the Altering their Tempers. Beſides I ſuppoſe our Authour may have hear'd of Enemies entering a Church with other deſigns than to Receive the Sacrament, or to be ſuppoſed one of the Communicants, not to mention any of our late Sacrilegious Church Robbers, but I have read (if I be not miſtaken) of one *Titus Oates*, who has told us, he went over to the Church of *Rome* not with deſign to be a Friend to that Church, but upon ſome other more Pious deſign of promoting the (true) Proteſtant Intereſt; and the better to carry on his good Deſigns, Oaths, and Sacraments, was neceſſary for him to take; ſo if they are Enemies I cannot help being of *Vox Cleri's* Opinion they are better keept out than let in, whatever our Authour ſays to the contrary. But this *Vox Cleri* (as P. 20.) he ſays falling into his hand in a time of Merriment, will in ſome meaſure be an Apology for its Impertinent. (I had almoſt ſaid Impudent) Anſwer. For what could be more boldly ſaid than the juſtifying of the Diſſenters in their Separation, and laying the fault of it at the Churches Door? But I perceive our Authour thinks

thinks (from what incouragement I know not) that now or never is the time to clip her Wings; and it is not long ago, ſince they endeavoured it by an over-haſty complying with the late King and his Papiſt Councils: Then happy was he, that cou'd ſay or write any thing to blacken Her; And the Cauſe of all thoſe Laws againſt Non-conformity was laid at her Door; and the Perſecution, as they call it, which was promoted by a prevailing Faction at Court, (as the B. of *Salisbury* ſays in one of his Papers) was likewiſe laid at her Door, and all becauſe ſhe would not comply with the Papiſts and Diſſenters to deſtroy her ſelf, and them too: For I preſume no body doubts, had the Church of *England*, (which was firſt Courted) Comply'd with what was then by the late King deſired, there might have been (*before our high and mighty Deliverance*) another Face of Affairs, than now there is: But ſome may object that it was the Churches own Intereſt, that hindered their Compliance, &c. and if it were, I hope that does not leſſen the Juſtice of the Act; and the ſame Argument I hope is as good now for their not doing any thing againſt their own Intereſt; and I am willing to believe the Wiſdom of the Church is ſuch, that without being Inſtructed by our Authour ſhe knows, how to proceed in thoſe matters now in diſpute. Thoſe (he ſays P. 23.) that are againſt Alterations are thoſe that will not take the Oaths, nor own the preſent Government: What does our Authour pretend to be a Conjurer? I am ſure thoſe that reads his Book will not take him for one: This is a merry conceit indeed, I wonder what Relation has Alterations, &c. to taking the Oaths of bareing Faith and true Allegiance

giance to their Majeſties, who has taken an Oath themſelves to preſerve and defend the Church as now by Law Eſtabliſhed: ſure our Authour has in his merriment taken a merry Cup too much, I ſuppoſe it 'tis Ale, for Wine would have produced (from its inſpiring quality) ſomething more ſpritely than what is came from this dull Tubman. I have heard of People being cut for the Simples, but if there be ſuch an Operator, I would adviſe this Authour to Conſult him betimes, before the Diſtemper is to far gon; for if he, or ſome body for him, does not take ſome ſpeedy care of him, for ought I know there may be Reaſon enough for *Vox Cleri* to return him his bountiful New-years Gift; and becauſe he may look like himſelf I will make a ſmall Addition to it, (*viz.*) a Cap and a Feather. And ſo I take my leave without troubling him with ſo much as a hard word, becauſe I found ſome of *Vox Cleri's* ſtuck ſo faſt in his Throat, he could ſcarce get them up; but if he pleaſe to leave Directions at *Sam's* Coffee-Houſe, how I may ſend to him, I will be ſo kind to procure him a Doſe of the Princes Powder, which will certainly diſcharge all that Filth and Corruption which ſo clog his Stomach, and almoſt ſtifles his Underſtanding, *&c.* And now Sir give me leave to beg Pardon for this tedious Letter which (like ſome Taylors Bill) I Confeſs a good part might have been abated, had not the merry Authours Anſwer of *Vox Cleri*, fell into my hand, juſt as I had finiſhed the Conſiderations, *&c.* touching the making Alterations in our Eſtabliſhed Liturgy, which I Sir humbly offer to your own and all unprejudiced Perſons Conſiderations: and if any think I have been to ſharp in my Reflections. In Anſwer to that I will Sir

tell

tell you a Story: A poor Traveller going by a Gentleman's Houſe, a great Maſtiff-Dog came running with open Mouth at him, the poor Man having a Staff with a ſharp ſpike at one end, in his own Defence killed the Dog; The owner coming out at the ſame time, and ſeeing what was done, got a Conſtable, and carried the poor Man before a Juſtice of Peace, and required ſatisfaction for the loſs of his Dog. The Juſtice did indeed chide the poor Man, and told him he might have put off the Dog with the other end of his Staff; yes, Anſwers the poor Man, ſo I would Sir, had he come running to me with his other end foremoſt, *&c.* So if a Company of Blood-Hounds come baulling with open Mouth to worry and tear in pieces our Eſtabliſhed Church, I think no Weapons can be too ſharp to keep them off, let who will ſet them on. Beſides,

I would have them Conſider to whom they are intended, not to any particular Perſon, but pernicious Principles, (which are equally to be deteſted let them come from *Rome*, *Geneva*, or any other part of the World) that would ſoon (if care be not taken to prevent it) Reform both Church and State to the Model of Forty Eight. And where there is but the leaſt fear of Danger, Common Prudence will provide againſt it; for fore-warning is fore-arming; and doubting the worſt was ever reckoned the beſt Advice, for there can be but little harm in being ſo well provided, but a great deal may happen for lack of it: And therefore to conclude, I do here own to you Sir, (who knows me well, and I preſume believes the ſame) that I

was not prompted to the Writing and Publishing of this Letter, but through a just fear of a prevailing Faction making a breach in our Established Church; and an honest Zeal (which I hope is not contrary to knowledg) for her Doctrine and Discipline; which I look upon to be more agreeable to the Holy Scriptures than any Christian Church in the whole World. And had I as many Lives as there are Lines in this Letter, I would Sacrifice them all in her just Defence; for our Saviour has told us, *Matthew the 10. v. 32. 33. Whosoever therefore shall Confess me before Men, him will I Confess also before my Father which is in Heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before Men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in Heaven.* And it is but reasonable they should be so served, that have served (as somebody on this Day did) God and their King no better. And therefore to preserve the Church and the Crown, from being once more tumbled down, I would if I had not a Sword, sell my Coat to buy one; others may do as they please, and as often as the Moon change their Opinions, or like a Sculler, look one way, and Row another. For my part, I thank God, I am fixt, and hope it is not in the power of Men and Devils to Alter, or so much as shake the best Resolves of,

SIR,

Your truly Obliged, &c.

J. R.

Jan. the 30. 1689.

FINIS.